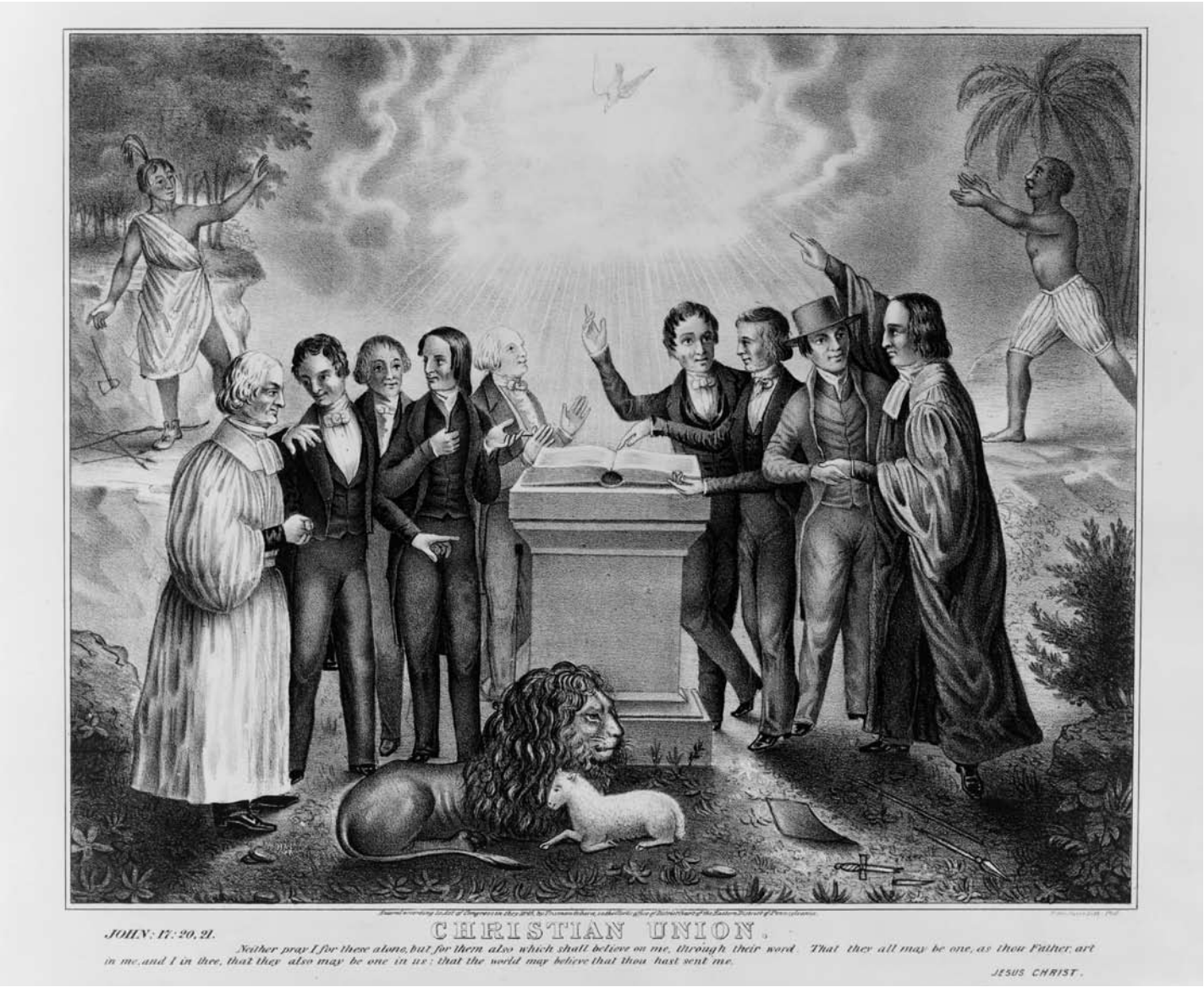

Christian Union, *by Thomas S. Sinclair, courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.*

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Interpreting the *Shawnee Sun*

Literacy and Cultural Persistence in Indian Country, 1833–1841

by James K. Beatty

Following the War of 1812 and the Indian Removal Act of 1830, Shawnees were among the thousands of Woodland Indians forced to leave their lands east of the Mississippi and make the arduous journey west. The removed tribes' new, "permanent" territories were located west of Missouri and Arkansas and stretched south from modern-day Nebraska to the Red River. The Shawnees' 1.6 million acre reservation spanned from modern-day Kansas City to Topeka. American supporters of Indian removal argued that it was in the eastern tribes' best interest to move away from the vices of white society, to a place where they could be properly civilized and Christianized by enlightened government officials and benevolent missionaries.[1]

One such missionary, Jotham Meeker, arrived in Indian country in the fall of 1833. The twenty-eight-year-old Baptist missionary from Cincinnati, Ohio, crossed the Mississippi with a printing press and the sincere desire to translate Native languages into script. While working with removed Shawnee Indians in present-day Kansas, Meeker used a unique writing system to print texts in the Shawnee language. One such text was a monthly periodical titled *Siwinowe Kesibwi*, or *Shawnee Sun*, which ran irregularly from 1835 to 1844. The publication was the first periodical to be printed in what is now Kansas and, if classified as a newspaper, the first in the United States to be written solely in an American Indian language.[2] Only two pages of this largely forgotten publication are known to exist today. Although some historians have noted the existence of the *Shawnee Sun*, they have been unable to decipher Meeker's esoteric orthography—until now.

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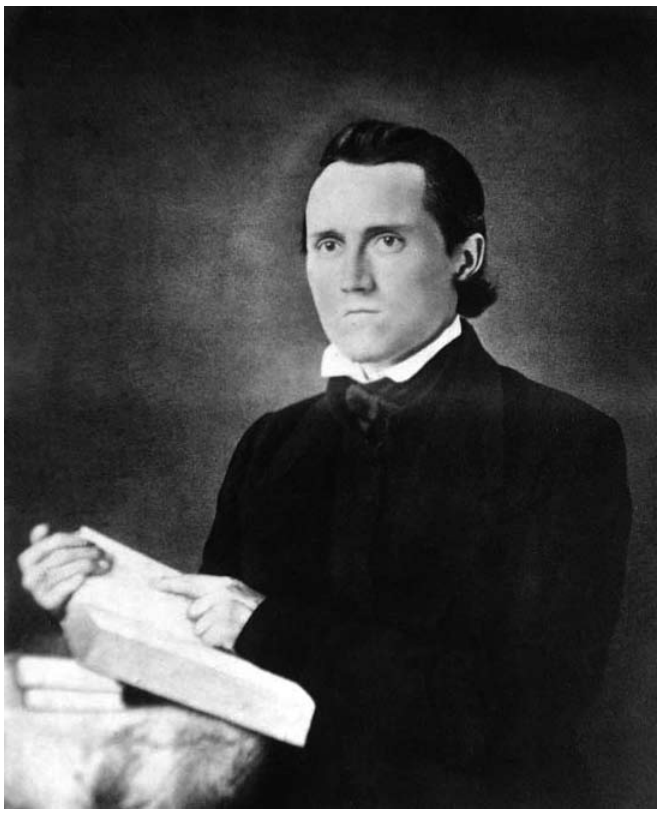
The author would like to thank Professor Stephen Warren, Mr. George Blanchard, and the professors and students who participated in the 2007 SHEAR/Mellon Undergraduate Summer Seminar for their invaluable assistance in writing this article.

1. Stephen Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors, 1795–1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2005), 98. For standard works on Indian removal policy, see Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975).

2. The *Cherokee Phoenix* was first published in 1828, but it was written in both Cherokee and English. For the only published article devoted to the *Shawnee Sun*, see Douglas C. McMurtrie, "The *Shawnee Sun*: The First Indian-language Periodical Published in the United States," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 2 (November 1933): 339–42. For more on Jotham Meeker, see John Mark Lambertson, "'Servant': The Reverend Jotham Meeker and the Ottawa Baptist Mission" (master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1992); Douglas C. McMurtrie and Albert H. Allen, *Jotham Meeker: Pioneer Printer of Kansas* (Chicago: Eyncourt Press, 1930).

George Blanchard, a respected elder of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, has taken a strong interest in Meeker's nineteenth-century Shawnee-language publications.[3] With his command of English, fluency in Shawnee, and resolute desire to decode Meeker's antiquated written Shawnee, Blanchard recently translated the two extant pages of the *Shawnee Sun* into English. Although some historians have viewed the *Sun* as a tribal newspaper, Blanchard's translation reveals that the November 1841 issue does not report the secular happenings of life on the Shawnee reservation. Instead, the *Sun* is a highly didactic publication, aimed at transforming American Indian culture and instilling Baptist theology within the predominately non-Christian Shawnee community.

The *Shawnee Sun* and Meeker's unique system of translating Algonquian languages into script, then, represent the intersection of two very different cultures. On the one hand, Baptist missionaries created an Algonquian-language orthography to enable more Shawnees to read the Bible and religious tracts. For Americans at the time, reading and writing was an important mark of civilization, and expanding literacy rates within Native communities promised to accelerate Indians' assimilation into American society. Moreover, like other nineteenth-century evangelical Protestants, Baptists believed that reading scripture was the primary means to God and salvation, regardless of one's ethnicity, cultural heritage, or religious persuasion. As historian Susan Neylan remarked in her study on Tsimshian Christianity, for many evangelical Protestant missions, "the central focus on the Bible resulted in a heavy emphasis on the importance of literacy."[4] In the Baptists' eyes, enabling Shawnees to read in their own language, rather than take on the onerous task of mastering English, quickened their path to salvation. In the Baptist worldview, literacy was essential for each individual conversion and it was also the surest means to Christian transformation on a societal level. By nurturing a robust core of faithful, literate converts, Baptists hoped to eventually establish a self-sustaining Native church that could extend the gospel message to its fellow tribesmen.



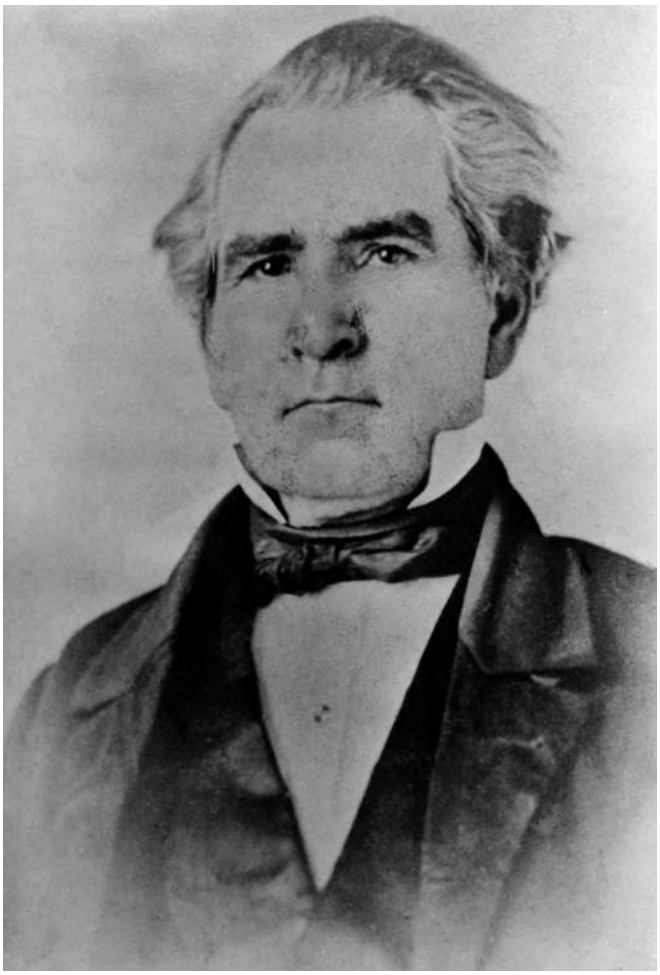
Jotham Meeker, a twenty-eight-year-old Baptist missionary from Cincinnati, Ohio, arrived in Indian country in 1833, armed with a printing press and the sincere desire to translate native languages into script. While working with removed Shawnee Indians in present-day Kansas, Meeker used a unique writing system to print texts in the Shawnee language. One such text was a monthly periodical titled Siwinowe Kesibwi, *or* Shawnee Sun, *which ran irregularly from 1835 to 1844.*

Because missionaries wielded the pens that recorded history on the reservation, Shawnee motivations for assisting Meeker with his linguistic work are not clear. Perhaps some Shawnees supported the transcription of their language because it reinforced their Native identity, while others hoped to gain access to political influence and material goods through their association with missionaries.[5] Still other Shawnees may have responded positively to the missionaries' message out of a sincere interest in the Christian faith during a time of profound change and uncertainty. Regardless of the Shawnees' exact motivations, the adoption of Meeker's orthography

3. At the time he translated the *Shawnee Sun*, Mr. Blanchard was sixty-two years old. As an elder—a term that reflects his age, his knowledge of Shawnee culture, his fluency in Shawnee, and his devotion to fellow tribe members—he regularly performs funerals, talks at feasts, and bestows Shawnee names to children. He is the director of security at Thunderbird Casino in Norman, Oklahoma, and a language instructor for Absentee Shawnees. Professor Stephen Warren, my mentor at Augustana College, introduced me to Mr. Blanchard.

4. Susan Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 164, 228.

5. See Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors*; Kevin J. Abing, "A Fall From Grace: Thomas Johnson and the Shawnee Indian Manual Labor School, 1839–1862" (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1995); Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing*, 23.



Johnston Lykins, a physician and missionary, who along with his father-in-law Isaac McCoy established the Shawnee Baptist Indian Mission, worked with Jotham Meeker to develop a Shawnee orthography that the two men used to produce the Shawnee Sun. *Lykins later served, from 1854 to 1855, as the second mayor of Kansas City, Missouri.*

and printing of the *Shawnee Sun* were largely dialogical processes, involving both missionary and Shawnee participants. More specifically, the November 1841 issue of the *Sun* reveals that while a small, influential group of Shawnees collaborated with missionaries in their linguistic work, the majority of Shawnees rejected Christianity and resisted missionary attempts to transform Algonquian ways of life.[6]

In the opening paragraphs of the *Sun*, the Baptist editor, missionary Johnston Lykins, uses biblical imagery of light and darkness, which has roots in the creation story of Genesis where God created light and separated it from darkness. According to the *Sun*'s editor, the Bible promised to disseminate light within a Shawnee community allegedly inundated with spiritual darkness. Alluding to parts of the gospels of Matthew and John, which missionaries had recently translated into Shawnee using Meeker's orthography, the editor wrote to his Shawnee audience: "Now part of the Good Book is written in their language. I wish for everyone to know it and everyone to have one. The Good Book is like a light because it directs you toward heaven. Everyone who doesn't have this Good Book travels in the dark."[7] As this passage illustrates, missionaries believed that those who possessed and understood the Bible were on the path to heaven, while everyone who did not inevitably stumbled down a trail of spiritual despair. Eleanor Richardson Meeker, Jotham Meeker's wife, displayed this prevalent missionary attitude in a letter to her sister: "I feel that our whole object for living in this distant land of darkness is, or should be to try to benefit these perishing souls by whom we are surrounded."[8] Enabling Indians to own, read, and understand the Bible and religious tracts became the Baptists' primary means of spreading their belief system; this, according to the missionaries, would be of the utmost benefit to the removed Woodland tribes. However, this emphasis on literacy and the transformative power of scripture was not unique to Baptists working on the Kansas plains. By translating and printing religious tracts such as the *Shawnee Sun* into indigenous languages, Jotham Meeker and his Baptist brethren were

6. Recent histories on Indian-missionary relations are increasingly recognizing that the clash of cultures and ideas is two-sided; exchange rarely flows in only one direction. For instance, throughout her work on Tsimshian Christianity, Susan Neylan emphasized the dialogical nature of Indian-missionary relations. Similarly, in his study on the Shawnee Manual Labor School, Kevin Abing stressed that Shawnees were active participants in the missionization process. Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing*; Abing, "A Fall From Grace."

7. Not surprisingly, the authorship of the *Shawnee Sun*'s various items is unclear. Under Meeker, who printed fourteen issues of the *Sun* before he moved to work among the Ottawas in 1837, Shawnees sometimes contributed. It is therefore possible that parts of the extant 1841 issue were written by a Shawnee convert or converts, such as Blackfeather. Notice that parts of the 1841 issue use the first person when addressing Shawnees, which suggests a Shawnee author. Lykins, a son-in-law of Isaac McCoy, perhaps the best known of these early nineteenth-century Baptist missionaries, was connected with the *Sun* from its founding and worked with printer and missionary John G. Pratt after Meeker's departure. For more on Lykin's involvement with Meeker and the *Sun*, see McMurtrie, "The Shawnee Sun," 340–42. The author accessed the *Shawnee Sun*, November 1841, Baptist Mission Press, on microfilm (M7027) at the Miller Nichols Library, Special Collections, University of Missouri-Kansas City. The paper also appears in its entirety on Kansas Memory at www.kansasmemory.org/item/209847.

8. Eleanor D. Meeker to Emoline R. Clough, August 10, 1838, M 617, Roll 1, Jotham Meeker Papers, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka (hereafter cited as "Jotham Meeker Papers").

participating in a broader Protestant movement that stretched across both time and space.

As early as the 1640s, Puritan missionaries stressed literacy among New England Algonquians. John Eliot immigrated to Massachusetts in 1631 and was the first Englishman to make a serious effort at learning the Algonquian dialect spoken by New England Indians along the Atlantic coast. In true Protestant form, Eliot stressed literacy as an essential step toward conversion. With the help of Native assistants, Eliot printed the entire Bible in the Massachusett language in 1663, the first Bible ever printed in North America.[9] Just off the New England coast, Eliot's Puritan contemporary, Thomas Mayhew, also used literacy to make major inroads among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard. Centuries later American Baptists adopted similar approaches to Native literacy and biblical authority. They also shared with their predecessors the metaphor of light to describe their missionary work among American Indians. In 1648, Thomas Shepherd completed his work of Puritan missiology, *Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel Breaking forth upon the Indians in New England*.[10] Baptists evidently selected even the title of the *Shawnee Sun* with great care, evoking a centuries-old contrast between the light of the gospel and the darkness of a sinful world.

Spurred on by nationalistic fervor and the Second Great Awakening, nineteenth-century American Protestants expanded on Eliot and Mayhew's earlier work, zealously establishing missions among different peoples around the world. In contrast to their Puritan precursors, nineteenth-century evangelicals placed greater religious influence and autonomy in the hands of ordinary people. An earlier emphasis on prolonged study and self-reflection yielded to more emotional responses to sermons and reading the Bible.[11] The various nineteenth-century Protestant denominations differed subtly in their theologies and approaches to conversion, but all emphasized the importance of literacy in spreading the gospel message among potential converts. As one historian put it, religious leaders during the Second Great Awakening "were intoxicated with the potential of print."[12] Shawnees in 1841 recognized the missionaries' devotion to letters, journals, and—most of all—their holy book. The Shawnee phrase for "Christian" found in the *Sun*—*hiwekitiwe elane*—translates literally as "someone that can write" or "paper man." Thus, even the Shawnees' understanding of missionaries rested on the strong Protestant attachment to the written word.[13]

Missionaries eager to place scripture in the hands of their charges ran into a reoccurring obstacle—the language barrier. Some of the cultures that missionaries encountered did not have the Bible translated into their languages, while other peoples had no written language at all. Denominations such as the Methodists preferred to instruct their charges in English only. For instance, the principal Methodist missionary to the Shawnees, Thomas Johnson, supported exclusively English-language instruction at the Shawnee Methodist schools.[14] This approach solved the dual problem of transcribing and translating foreign languages, but it often delayed literacy among potential converts. Baptists, on the other hand, recognized the importance—or at least the practicality—of translating oral languages into script and teaching indigenous peoples to read in their own tongue.

By the time Jotham Meeker crossed the Mississippi in the autumn of 1833 with his typesetting equipment, ink, and paper in hand, the Baptist Board of Foreign Missions already had dozens of printing presses employed in Asia, Africa, and North America. According to an 1831 report, the Baptist Board controlled forty presses worldwide. During the 1830s the printing and translating efforts of missionaries in Southeast Asia received extensive attention in the *American Baptist Magazine*, the primary publication of the Baptist General Convention. In Burma, or what is now the Union of Myanmar, the Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson worked for years on translating the Bible into Burmese. Baptists at the Burma mission looked forward to the day when they could print the Bible in Burmese to save millions who they believed were

9. Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 29–34; Hilary E. Wyss, *Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity, and Native Community in Early America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 42.

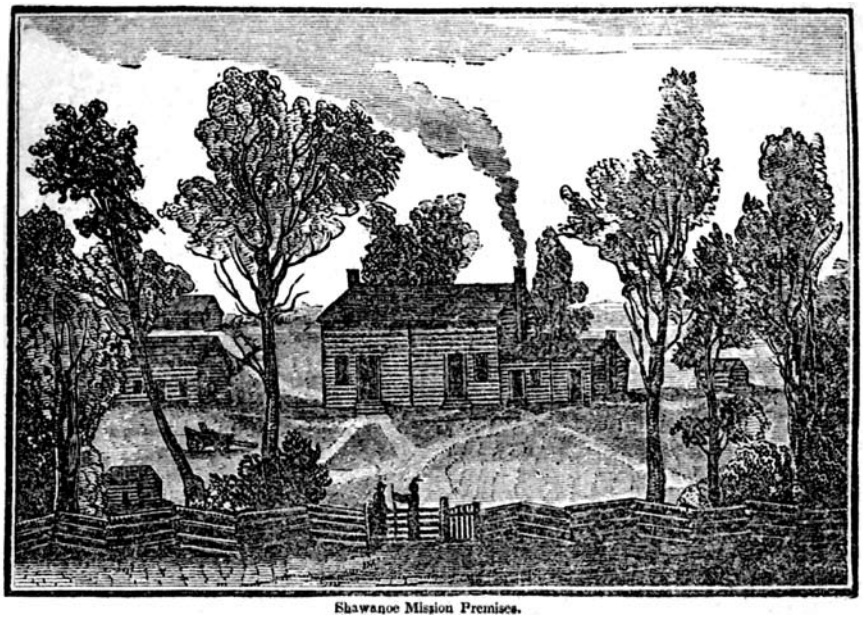
10. David Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries: Colonists, Christianity, and Community among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard, 1600–1871* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25.

11. Robert Berkhofer, *Salvation and the Savage: An Analysis of Protestant Missions and American Indian Response, 1787–1862* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1965), 1; Theda Purdue and Michael D. Green, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 45–46; Abing, "A Fall From Grace," 18; Robert Abzug, "Northern Revivalism," in *Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787–1848*, ed. Sean Wilentz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 159–64.

12. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 11.

13. The meaning of the term *hiwekitiwe elane*—as well as the meaning of other Shawnee words mentioned in this article—is based on George Blanchard's translation of the November 1841 issue of the *Shawnee Sun*. Blanchard is one of approximately seventy fluent Shawnee speakers alive today. Without his command of both English and Shawnee, eagerness to translate the *Sun*, and willingness to help me understand the text, writing this essay would have been impossible.

14. Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors*, 108.



The Shawnee Baptist Mission, labeled "Shawanoe Mission Premises" in this drawing from the History of American Missions to the Heathen, from their Commencement to the Present Time *published in 1840, was one of many denominational missions established in the early nineteenth century in what would become Kansas. In June 1832 Johnston Lykins located his headquarters on land about three miles south of Thomas Johnson's Shawnee Methodist Mission. Soon additional missionaries arrived, and by the time Isaac McCoy visited early that autumn, significant physical progress had been accomplished. "Their houses [including a school house] are not completed," observed McCoy, "but . . . they will be substantial and comfortable buildings and are pretty well situated." The mission, which operated until the mid-1850s, was also home to Jotham Meeker's printing press operation.*

"perishing in moral darkness." In 1835 Judson printed the first edition of the entire Burman Bible and viewed this feat as the harbinger of a new, spiritually enlightened era at the mission.[15]

As Judson translated the Bible into Burmese, Jonathan Wade engaged in his own linguistic endeavors among the Karens at the Tavoy mission in southeastern Burma, just west of present-day Thailand. Like Shawnees prior to 1833, Karens spoke an oral language that had no written form. Wade determined to develop a system of writing for the Karen language and translate scripture into it. In 1836 he successfully completed the reduction of the Pgho Karen language to writing using Burman characters. With this new writing system in place, the missionaries at Tavoy wrote a joint letter to the Board requesting a press. They believed that if the Board supplied them with printing equipment, their linguistic work would "soon make the Karen nation around us a reading and a Christian people."[16]

Baptist missionaries in Africa, too, considered devising a writing system necessary for their evangelism. At the Ninth Triennial Meeting of the Baptist General Convention, which was held in New York in 1838, the Committee on the African Mission reported the difficulty of preaching to Africans who had no written language. According to the report, little progress could be made "unless the people are taught to read." The committee's top priority, then, was "to form for the natives an alphabetical language" and build schools for Africans' instruction.[17]

For Baptists in Asia and Africa, literacy and Christianity went hand in hand. Protestant missionaries who first settled among American Indians in the Pacific Northwest during the 1830s also brought with them habits that were "deeply bookish." They wrote letters, read reports, obeyed written laws, and adhered to a religion structured around a holy book. Moreover, missionaries sought to extend their literate habits to the Nez Perce settled along the Columbia River and its tributaries. In 1839 a small printing press arrived in the Northwest at Lapwai as a gift from Hawaiian missionaries. The Presbyterian missionary Henry Spalding and his associates at Lapwai wasted no time in printing religious tracts in a phonetic alphabet based on Roman types. Much to the missionaries' dismay, however, Indians did not learn to read with the enthusiasm or speed that missionaries originally anticipated.[18] The Nez Perce, like many American Indian communities elsewhere, demonstrated a strong commitment to their religious beliefs and rituals in the face of intense proselytizing.

Missionaries trekked over mountains and crossed vast oceans to preach, teach, and, ultimately, convert. They expected to find abject peoples eager to listen to their message and read their religious publications. The

15. *American Baptist Magazine* 9 (January 1829): 31; *American Baptist Magazine* 14 (July 1834): 361; *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 17 (January 1837): 3. After 1835, *American Baptist Magazine*'s title became the *Baptist Missionary Magazine*.

16. *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 17 (August 1837): 196.

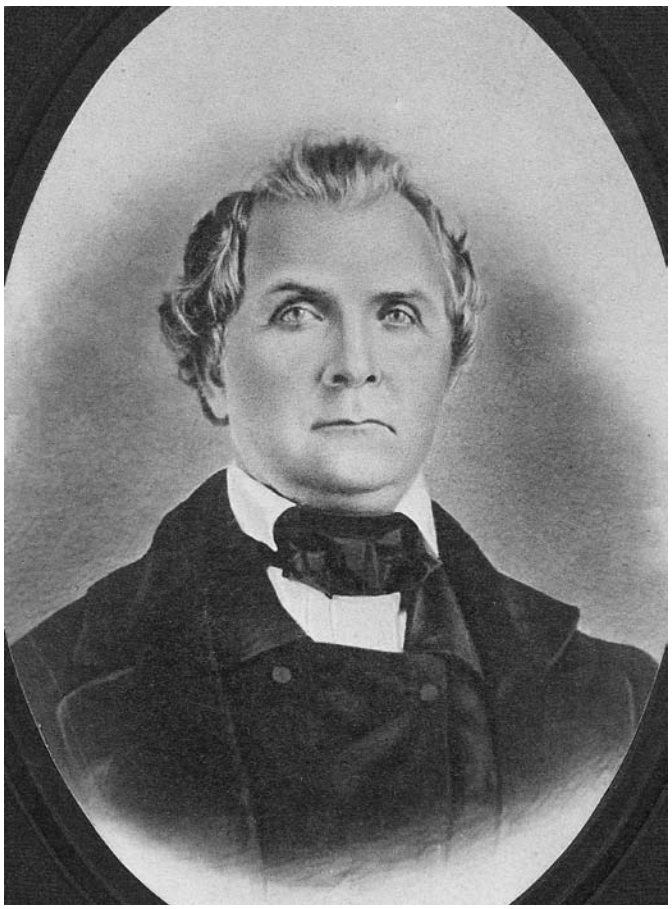
17. John Putnam and the Baptist General Convention for Foreign Missions, *Proceedings of the Ninth Triennial Meeting of the Baptist General Convention for Foreign Missions: Held in the city of New-York, April, 1838* (Boston: Press of John Putnam, 1838), 10.

18. Albert Furtwangler, *Bringing Indians to the Book* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 10, 106–7.

Baptist Board was not shy about its ethnocentric view of truth, writing unabashedly in 1836, "the people *will* read when the truth is put into their hands."[19] Like their counterparts in the United States, Baptist missionaries in Asia and Africa understood the truths of scripture to be self-evident. In their view, one only needed a Bible and the ability to read its pages to realize that its life-saving truth came directly from God.

In actuality, though, the Nez Perce that Spalding encountered in the Northwest and the emigrant tribes that Meeker worked with in Kansas were not the welcoming, malleable learners that missionaries supposed they would be. They did not always read the Bible when it was placed in their hands or listen to missionary sermons when admonished that "a person who hates sermons hates his own spirit."[20] The Nez Perce and Shawnees were active participants in their own Christianization, not lumps of moist clay waiting to be molded by the benevolent hands of Protestant missionaries. The gap between missionary expectations and Native reality created space for compromise and points to the dialogical nature of Indian-missionary relations inherent in the *Shawnee Sun* and Meeker's linguistic work.

In his pioneering study on the Great Lakes region, historian Richard White used a powerful metaphor—the "middle ground"—to describe European-Algonquian relationships prior to the War of 1812. According to White, accommodation and coexistence characterized the middle ground, a place "in between" European cultural dominance and Algonquian independence. This shared cultural world depended on and grew from the inability of both Europeans and Algonquians to achieve their divergent ends through force.[21] Arguably, a sort of middle ground existed between emigrant Indians and Protestant missionaries during the first two decades after removal. However, the trans-Mississippi middle ground was not a shared economic and cultural world as its eastern counterpart had been because of the imbalanced power relations that existed on post-removal tribal lands. Christian missions could be "intrusive, coercive, and destructive," particularly in the implementation of boarding schools, which sought to strip Indian children from their families and detach them from their traditional patterns of life. But in some ways, "symbiotic exchange" continued to shape Indian-missionary relations west of the Mississippi long after it ceased to characterize relations between Algonquians and European powers in the Great Lakes region.[22] Mis-



A native of the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, the Reverend Thomas Johnson, pictured here, established the Methodist mission to the Shawnees in 1830. Unlike Baptist missionaries Meeker and Lykins, Johnson supported exclusively English-language instruction at the Shawnee Methodist schools. Johnson retired from his work in Indian education in 1858.

19. *American Baptist Magazine* 12 (June 1832): 174.

20. *Shawnee Sun*, November 1841; Stephen Warren, "Rethinking Assimilation: American Indians and the Practice of Christianity, 1800–1861," in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, eds. Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie (Cambridge.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 111–12, 120.

21. Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x, 52. James Merrell offers a contrasting perspective on colonial Indian-white relations. He stresses the importance of "go-betweens" that mediated the sharp differences between colonists and Algonquians on the Pennsylvania frontier. His ruling metaphor is not the middle ground but the woods, which separated two irreconcilable worlds and was crossed by only a few intermediaries at their own risk. James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvanian Frontier* (New York: Norton and Company, 1999).

22. Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 8–9; Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104 (June 1999): 819.

sionaries had access to church funds, political influence, and practical supplies that Indians needed to survive in their new western lands. The removed tribes, on the other hand, had what missionaries desired most—mastery of Algonquian languages, children to send to boarding schools, and ultimately, souls to convert. Both missionaries and Shawnees could allocate or withhold these desirables in a way that promoted their disparate interests.

Protestant missionaries who moved to present-day Kansas brought with them grandiose plans for the Indians' salvation. When they arrived, though, missionaries encountered people who requested clothes, ploughs, food, and a practical education instead of sermons and baptisms.[23] Moreover, the removed Indians had skills on which missionaries depended, and they maintained the ability to undermine missionary success by resisting evangelists' efforts at Indian reform. If missionaries wanted to advance their own agenda, they needed to stay receptive to Shawnee interests. Thus, the unique conditions of Indian-missionary relations in Indian country allowed Shawnee intermediaries to exert limited influence over their would-be converters and to play integral roles in the missionaries' work as exhorters, preachers, interpreters, and translators.[24]

In fact, missionaries relied on the Indians they hoped to convert more than they would have preferred and certainly more than they generally acknowledged in their reports and letters. Many of the contemporary documents penned by Baptists overlooked the dialogue between Shawnees and Baptists inherent in the missionization process. For instance, Isaac McCoy, one of the leading Baptist missionaries among the removed tribes, credited Baptist ingenuity alone for the creation of Meeker's orthography when, in actuality, Shawnees played an important role in its development and acceptance. In June 1836 McCoy wrote proudly to Lewis Cass, the secretary of war under President Andrew Jackson, about "the circumstances of teaching the Indians to read in their several mother tongues and upon what we term the New System." According to McCoy, the principal virtue of the "new system"—the written form of Shawnee on which the *Shawnee Sun* is based—was its simplicity. McCoy bragged that the system was "so exceedingly simple" that even adult Shawnees, "unaccustomed to the study of letters, can learn to read in their own language in the course of a few weeks." Because of the orthography's simplicity, McCoy later argued, "it ought to be introduced among all nations destitute of a written language."[25]

Meeker's system of writing diverged from other methods in use at the time—for instance, Sequoyah's eighty-five character Cherokee syllabary—because it used English letters to represent specific sounds in Algonquian languages. According to McCoy's description, "every uncompounded sound which can be distinguished by the ear" was assigned a particular English letter.[26] English characters, then, were not pieced together to form syllables, which in turn formed words, as in the English system of spelling. Rather, Meeker's system was strictly phonetic and made the task of learning to read and spell much easier because words were necessarily written as they were pronounced. McCoy was enthusiastic about the new system because its supposed simplicity promised to open the doors of literacy to more Shawnees while keeping the cost of printing low by using English typefaces.[27]

According to McCoy, the new system's simplicity was not just theoretical, but evident in the ease with which some Shawnees learned to read. In an 1835 letter to Indian agent Richard Cummins, McCoy reported, "About 40 [Shawanoes] have learned to read the Shawanoe language and about 15 to write."[28] If McCoy's figure is accurate, then only 2 percent of the approximately two thousand Shawnees living in pre-territorial Kansas could read in 1835. The Shawnee readership for the *Sun* and other missionary publications, then, was quite small. This fact did not stop McCoy from believing that a social and spiritual revolution was underway among American Indians: "Never since the education of the aborigines was

23. Joseph B. Herring, *The Enduring Indians of Kansas: A Century and a Half of Acculturation* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 77–80. For an earlier comparison of compromise and adaptation between missionaries and eastern Indians see William McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789–1839* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

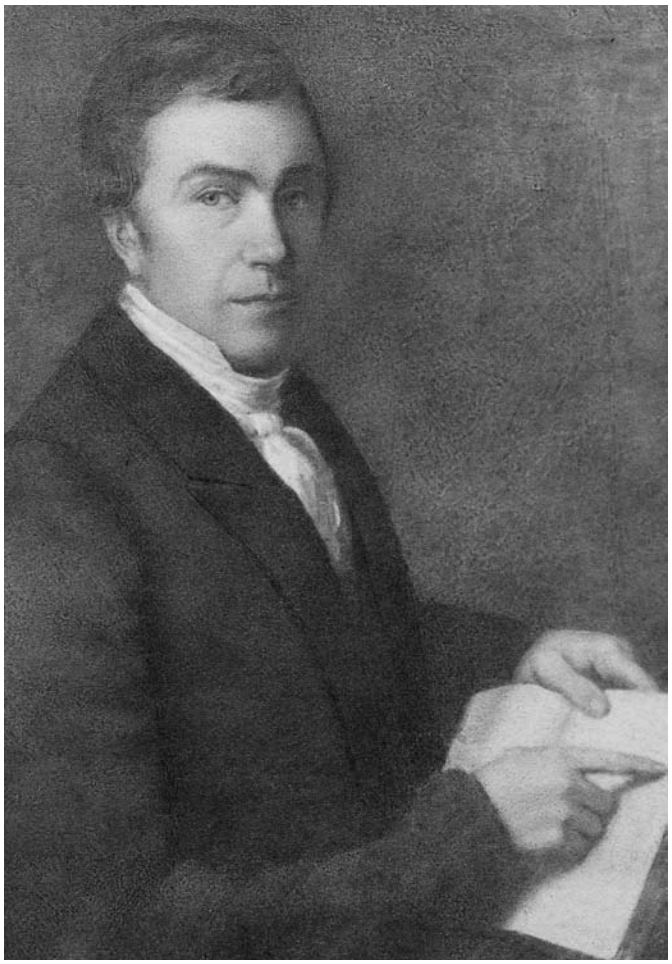
24. Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors*, 111.

25. Isaac McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions: Embracing Remarks on the Former and Present Condition of the Aboriginal Tribes, Their Settlement within Indian Territory and Their Future Prospects* (Washington: William M. Morrison, 1840; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), 472; Isaac McCoy to Lewis Cass, June 10, 1836, M 1129, Roll 9, Isaac McCoy Papers, Library and Archives Division, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka (hereafter cited as "Isaac McCoy Papers").

26. McCoy, *History of Baptist Indian Missions*, 473. For more on Sequoyah and the Cherokee syllabary, see Jill Lepore, *A is for American: Letters and Characters in the Newly United States* (New York: Knopf, 2002), 63–90; Theda Perdue, "The Sequoyah Syllabary and Cultural Revitalization," in *Perspectives on the Southeast: Linguistics, Archaeology, and Ethnohistory*, ed. Patricia B. Kwachka (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 116–26.

27. Isaac McCoy, *Annual Register of Indian Affairs Within the Indian (or Western) Territory* (Shawanoe Baptist Mission: J. G. Pratt, 1836), 2:26; Lambertson, "Servant," 18–19.

28. Isaac McCoy to R. W. Cummins, September 10, 1835, M1129, Roll 8, Isaac McCoy Papers.



Isaac McCoy was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, and raised in Louisville, Kentucky. At nineteen he moved to Indian Territory and spent much of the rest of his life working as a Baptist missionary among the removed tribes. McCoy, who sat for this portrait in 1831, did not always acknowledge the role that Indians played in their own education, as when he credited Baptist ingenuity alone for the creation of Meeker's orthography though the Shawnees who studied with Meeker and other missionaries played an important role in its development and acceptance.

first attempted have so many learned to read with so little labor and cost."[29] McCoy proudly credited Meeker and his fellow Baptist missionaries for the ingenuity and simplicity of the new orthography. Lost in much of McCoy's writing was the integral role Shawnees played in the implementation and success of the new system.

In nearly all his work Meeker cooperated directly with the Shawnees he hoped to convert. This proved particularly true for his Shawnee-language publications. Meeker relied on a core of Native assistants centered around Joseph DeShane and Blackfeather to help him translate texts and create a comprehensible religious message for their kinsmen. DeShane and Blackfeather, both of whom were important supporters of missionary work on the reservation, contributed regularly to the *Shawnee Sun*, including the eighth issue printed in February 1836. In July, Meeker again met with both men to look over the ninth issue of the *Sun* before it headed to the press. He scribbled in his journal: "Read the Sun with Deshane and with Blackfeather, and correct it."[30]

Although Baptists printed Shawnee-language texts with great ardor, Methodists focused mainly on English-language instruction among the emigrant tribes. They did, however, reluctantly print some material in Algonquian languages using a system similar to Sequoyah's Cherokee syllabary. This system of writing was relatively complicated, expensive, and, as a result, used sparingly.[31] Despite the Methodists' preference for English-language instruction and disdain for the Baptists' orthography, an influential sect of Shawnees urged the Methodists to abandon their syllabary and adopt the Baptists' new system. Shawnees held a council on June 15, 1834, and decided to adopt Meeker's system of writing. Meeker commented on the Shawnees' approval of the orthography in a letter three days later: "The Indians seem so well pleased with it that on last Sabbath, the 15th inst., all who have learnt to read according to the syllabic plan, together with all the Methodist Indians met at the Methodist mission house, and in public council decided to drop their mode of writing and to adopt ours."[32] The day after the Shawnee council, Thomas Johnson spoke with Meeker about using the Baptist orthography to print texts for Shawnee Methodists. Losing potential converts who preferred written instruction in their own language was a risk Johnson did not want to take. The Shawnee council and subsequent Methodist acceptance of the new system reveal that even Meeker's orthography, which McCoy bragged was brilliant and revolutionary, needed Shawnee acceptance to become the predominant method of printing on the reservation.[33]

Exactly why the Baptists' Shawnee-language printing found strong support among some Shawnees remains uncertain. Most likely, Shawnees recognized that

29. McCoy, *Annual Register*, 26.

30. Quoted in McMurtrie and Allen, *Jotham Meeker*, 77; see also Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors*, 111–12; McMurtrie, "The Shawnee Sun," 340.

31. Lambertson, "Servant," 30–31.

32. Jotham Meeker to Lucius Bolles, June 18, 1834, M617, Roll 1, Jotham Meeker Papers.

33. Stephen Warren, "The Baptists, the Methodists, and the Shawnees: Conflicting Cultures in Indian Territory, 1833–1834," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 17 (Autumn 1994): 159; Abing, "A Fall From Grace," 101–2.

it fulfilled a practical need within their community; literacy was vital to effectively dealing with government officials and treaty negotiators.[34] Perhaps it also gave Shawnees a stronger sense of cultural identity during a time in which missionaries, reformers, and government officials pushed for profound political, social, and religious change within Indian communities. Regardless of the exact reasons, the adoption of Meeker's method of writing appears to have been a product of subtle negotiation and indirect compromise. Missionaries preferred to instruct Shawnees in English, but the practical advantages of Shawnee-language instruction coupled with the Shawnees' desire to be taught in their own language pushed missionaries to change their strategies. In the end, compromise and adaptation helped bridge the gap between missionary linguistic goals and Algonquian wishes in Indian country during the 1830s and 1840s.

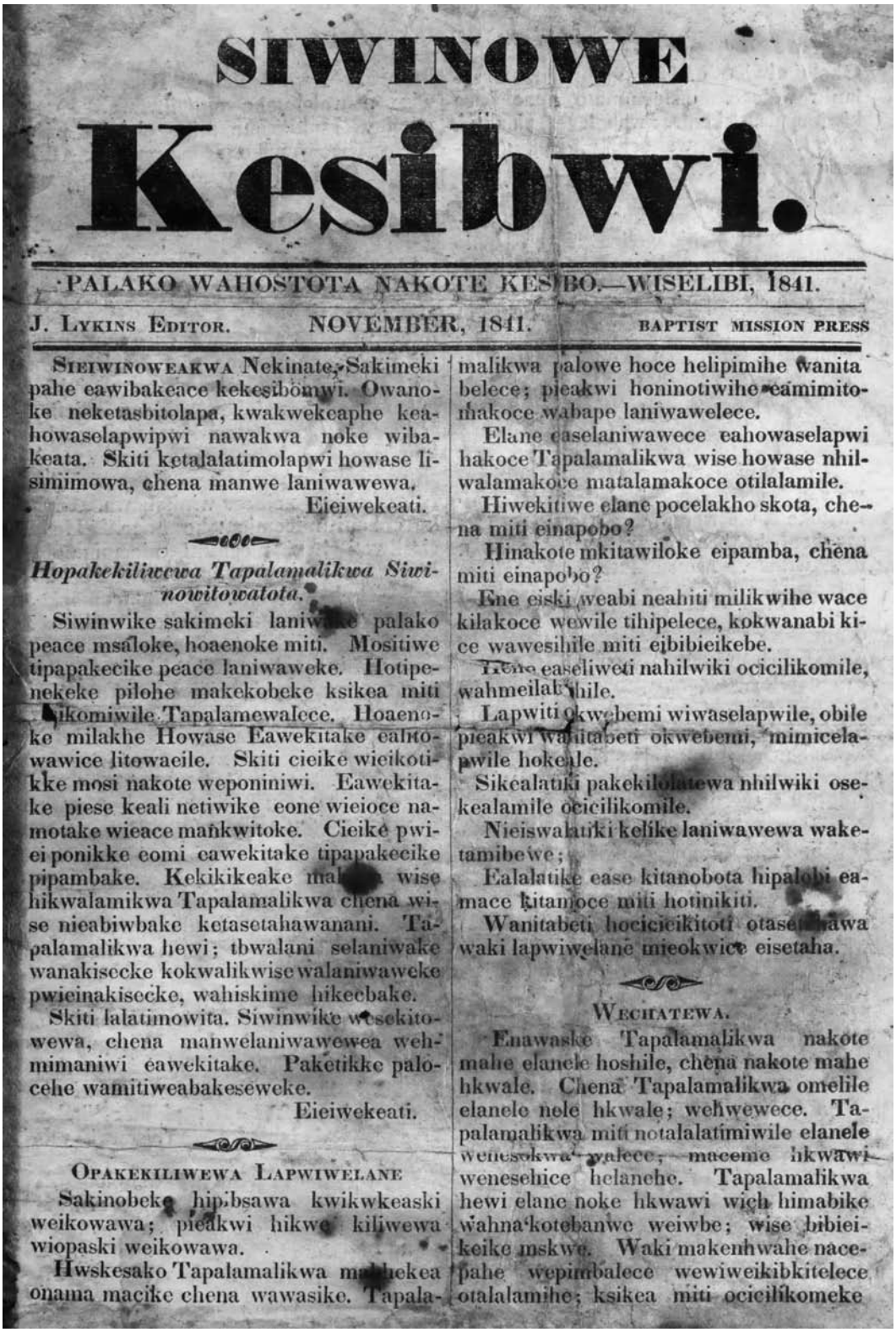
Algonquian-language instruction represented an overlap of Shawnee and Baptist interests on tribal lands. Both sides benefited—albeit in different ways—from Meeker's orthography and Shawnee literacy. However, instructing Shawnees to read in their own language for the sake of spiritual salvation was just one component of the missionary enterprise in Indian country. The scope of mission work reached well beyond preaching the gospel to encompass extensive efforts to "civilize" Indians.[35] Although Shawnees displayed a general support for the linguistic work of missionaries, many resisted more invasive and manipulative components of the Americans' civilization program.

The November 1841 issue of the *Shawnee Sun* highlights both missionary attempts to transform Algonquian ways of life using the written word and widespread Shawnee resistance to Christianity and the cultural demands associated with it. Under the subtitle "A sermon by a wise man," which was most likely an allusion to King Solomon, the *Sun*'s editor preached, "When a man lives a certain way, he makes God happy, and God allows man to have a better relationship with Him."[36] In addition to reading the Bible and religious tracts, potential converts were expected to break cleanly from their pre-Christian past. Missionaries began to equate the Christian way of life with an idealized form of Anglo-American cultural practices, a conflation that had direct ramifications on their attitudes toward Native American lifestyles.[37] As historian Daniel Richter put it, because missionaries were "unable to separate Christianity from European culture," they persistently "hammered home the sinfulness of basic patterns of behavior rooted in Native culture."[38]

Undermining and transforming Native culture and religion was intimately connected to Indian missions from the time of John Eliot in the 1640s. With seventeenth-century Puritan identity firmly rooted in English culture, Eliot expected Indian converts to repudiate their past and become carbon copies of English men and women. To facilitate this transformation, Eliot established "praying towns" for Algonquian converts so that they could be isolated from their non-Christian kinsmen and instructed in English religion, education, and agricultural practices.[39] Exhibiting a similar mentality, nineteenth-century missionaries introduced Anglo-American agricultural practices, understandings of gender, and family structure in their attempts to reorder Shawnee society. Within Algonquian societies, women typically worked the field and tended crops while men were responsible for seasonal hunting and fishing. Shawnee women and men were no different. In fact, their gender-based division of labor was deeply rooted in their religious practices. The spring and fall Bread Dances, the two principal Shawnee rituals, reinforced the tribe's gender roles. The spring Bread Dance celebrated the role of women as food providers and agriculturists during the growing season; the fall Bread Dance emphasized the role of men as hunters in the autumn and winter months. Shawnee women and men thus fulfilled complementary economic roles within their culture. Although this gender-based division of labor was both convenient for Shawnees and embedded in their religion, it seemed unnatural and inefficient to American missionaries.[40]

In American society industrialization defined distinct roles for men and women. The home and domestic tasks became the domain of women while industry and capitalism were the responsibility of men. Accordingly,

34. Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors*, 112.
35. Purdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 45–46.
36. *Shawnee Sun*, November 1841.
37. Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing*, 256; Purdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 11; Satz, *American Indian Policy*, 246–78; Kevin Abing, "A Holy Battleground: Methodist, Baptist and Quaker Missionaries among Shawnee Indians, 1830–1844," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 21 (Summer 1998): 120.
38. Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 124.
39. Neal Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The 'Praying Indians' of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," *William and Mary Quarterly* 31 (Spring 1974): 27–54; Wyss, *Writing Indians*, 17–18.
40. James Howard, *Shawnee!: The Ceremonialism of a Native American Tribe and Its Cultural Background* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 44, 223–24, 245; Warren, *The Shawnee and Their Neighbors*, 44, 50–52; Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 5.



SIWINOWE Kesibwi.

PALAKO WAHOSTOTA NAKOTE KESIBO.—WISELIBI, 1841.

J. Lykins Editor. NOVEMBER, 1841. BAPTIST MISSION PRESS

Sieiwinoweakwa Nekinate, Sakimeki pahe eawibakeace kekesibomwi. Owanoke neketasbitolapa, kwakwekeaphe keahowaselapwipwi nawakwa noke wibakeata. Skiti ketalalatimolapwi howase lisimimowa, chena manwe laniwawewa.

Eieiwekeati.

Hopakekiliwewa Tapalamalikwa Siwinowitowatota.

Siwinwike sakimeki laniwake palako peace msaloke, hoaenoke miti. Mositiwe tipapakecike peace laniwaweke. Hotipenekeke pilohe makekobeke ksikea miti likomiwile Tapalamewalece. Hoaenoke milakhe Howase Eawekitake eahowawice litowaeile. Skiti cieike wieikotikke mosi nakote weponiniwi. Eawekitake piese keali netiwike eone wieioce namotake wieace mankwitoke. Cieike pwiei ponikke eomi eawekitake tipapakecike pipambake. Kekikikeake mal wise hikwalamikwa Tapalamalikwa chena wise nieabiwbake ketasetahawanani. Tapalamalikwa hewi; tbwalani selaniwake wanakisecke kokwalikwise walaniwaweke pwieinakisecke, wahiskime hikeebake.

Skiti lalatimowita. Siwinwike wesekitowewa, chena manwelaniwawewea wehmimaniwi eawekitake. Paketikke palocehe wamitiweabakeseweke.

Eieiwekeati.

Opakekiliwewa Lapwiwelane

Sakinobeke hipibsawa kwikwkeaski weikowawa; pieakwi hikwe kiliwewa wiopaski weikowawa.

Hwskesako Tapalamalikwa mahekea onama macike chena wawasike. Tapalamalikwa palowe hoce helipimihe wanita belece; pieakwi honinotiwihe eamimitomakoce wabape laniwawelece.

Elane easelaniwawece eahowaselapwi hakoce Tapalamalikwa wise howase nhilwalamakoce matalamakoce otilalamile.

Hiwekitiwe elane pocelakho skota, chena miti einapobo?

Hinakote mkitawiloke eipamba, chena miti einapobo?

Ene eiski weabi neahiti milikwihe wace kilakoce wewile tihipelece, kokwanabi kice wawesihile miti eibibieikebe.

Hene easeliweti nahilwiki ocicilikomile, wahmeilabihile.

Lapwiti okwebemi wiwaselapwile, obile pieakwi wahitabeti okwebemi, mimicelapwile hokeale.

Sikealatiki pakekilolatewa nhilwiki osekealamile ocicilikomile.

Nieiswalatiki kelike laniwawewa waketamibewe;

Ealalatike ease kitanobota hipalobi eamace kitanoce miti hotinikiti.

Wanitabeti hocicieikitoti otaseihawa waki lapwiwelane mieokwice eisetaha.

Wechiatewa.

Enawaske Tapalamalikwa nakote mahe elanele hoshile, chena nakote mahe hkwale. Chena Tapalamalikwa omelile elanele nele hkwale; wehwewece. Tapalamalikwa miti notalalatimiwile elanele wenesokwa yalece; maceme hkwawi wenesehice helanehe. Tapalamalikwa hewi elane noke hkwawi wich himabike wahna'kotebanwe weiwbe; wise bibieikeike mskwe. Waki makenhwahe nacepahe wepimbalece wewiweikibkitelece otalalamihe; ksikea miti ocicilikomeke

These two pages are all that survive of the Shawnee Sun, *which ran irregularly from 1835 to 1844. The publication was the first periodical to be printed in what is now Kansas and, if classified as a newspaper, the first in the United States to be written solely in an American Indian language. In the pages that follow this reproduction of the* Sun, *George Blanchard, a respected elder of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, and James Beatty offer a translation of the newspaper's text.*

Okelhimiwihe otalaniwamhe ene weselaniwawelece. Miceminato hene ease kiwice wemakenhwawabelece; pieakwi, Tapalamalikwa wahochihe, cieike nease laniwawelece.

Elane eawowece hkwale eolone wikekipece iskime; chena hkwawi eawsece elapele kikeki wehmieiweliwe, Naeswe hene selaniwawewita wehmanwe laniwaweke chena, hotipalobamwihe wehwikomakowihe. Miti wakhe eipkea hoteke napowa pkeanakowita chena. Pieakwi winitabeta hkwawi, Tapalamalikwa hene otalalamile helapele wisepkealece.

NESWA LANI.

Neswalani cieike eoce kotike laniwawanake eahike. Nakotwalani man- Nekotwalani miceminatoke. Ce- nhike mankwitoke. Miceminato heni keakekemewati wihoce nhike miceminatoke. Nilati honakiliwile Ceseseleˇ Nilati miceminatole, Nekini tinewaene matameaeine? Hanankwitoke keti walitoka miceminatoke? Eone wahoce wikotimine.

Koli ealaniwaweikwa kwaeakwewi wapbaei ketalaniwawewanan- Eacalle hipalobeweeikwa nakotwalanihe ketieipa ksikea pobe ken- einabepa wise wikotimikwa wawasike; chena macike.

Paloce eakitamoeikwa ketieilame, wikotipa. Hena kepipabatiwipa miceminato wali kekikephimiwipa ktiwikini. Nheti wawawa kekikeake makoni miceminato. Eone micibe. Kikeake mewa wise pikecekiteke. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa wisepwi otikealamobowice waokeakeimeke. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa weposkonotake manatowe kesakeke. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa weskealamoboce Tapalamalikwa. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa wise ninsewake. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa ninikiwelapwiwa. Eone macibe. Kikeakemewa, wise kikemotake. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa wise nininhicemoke. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa wise wiwinekeamoke. Eone macibe. Kikeakemewa wise wiwinaboke. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa micetahawa, chena micekiliwewa. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa wise niswalatotake nitopilwewa. Eone micibe. Hokikeake mihe elanehe wispkeawiwice wewihe. Eone macibe. Okikeakemihe hkwahe wise nikiliwice wasewice. Eone micibe. Okikeakemihe hkwahe wise panabwiwice otipalobamwihe. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa wisepikbalamobowice waokeakeimeke chena watipalobameke. Kikeakemewa wise ninaniwibotehobowice msawake. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa wise mimaneealake. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa wise nopiwikine eieoke chena naninitiocekea eieoke nalohce. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa wisepwi ketamenikwa lateke. Eone micibe. Kikeakemewa wise nawisilokebe eieoke. Eone micibe. Kikeakekeamo cikese winitabewa. Cieike eolomi miceminatoke hoce. Hene eiseliweti heni nieakiliti miceminatole. Hene wahice miceminatoke. Tapalamalikwa [illegible] cieike nieininhicemocke, chena wawinabocke, chena nikioke, chena pakelotikke, micelaniwawewa, watawe wahiwice skotawe kcekimeke. Tapalamalikwa hewi, miceminatoke nalaskiwike wanitabecke. Eone wieace micibe. Matameaeakwa keahisanapwi. Miceminato kekoce pame walakowi wise napobolwikwa hockotamake. Netise pealalwikwa mositiwe keanapobokowi; pieakwi miti ketihitobopwi. Tapalamalikwa keketamenikwalamakowi hotibi sekwkeko kewowl. Henoke notimoko, ease kikeakemewace. Ceseseke hene wieace laniwawewanake—Kikeakemewa.

Kehikwalami Tapalamaki malskea ketahe, chena kewese kitowewa, chena ketasetahawa; mositiwe. Kikeakekeamo wisepwi niisewake wisepwi kikemotake. Wisepwi wiwipisepkeake. Wisepwi wiwinekeamoke. Wisepwi nininhicemoke. Wisepwi mimice kiliweke. Wisepwi wiweeikowake. Wisepwi pipikecekiteke. Wisepwi wiwinaboke. Wisepwi mimiwipeke.

Kikeakemewa, wise hikwalamice milikwihe easekilakoce wenbi piese nhilwiki weli kikeakemewa wise hene hpanilice weabi kotikhe nhilwiki wiepanitoce weei. Kikeakemewa wise tapisio silatelece wi-

Shawnee Sun.[1]

MONTHLY PUBLICATION.—FALL, 1841.

J. Lykins Editor NOVEMBER, 1841. Baptist Mission Press

My Shawnee friends, a long time ago your sun was very bright. Now we are sending you, immediate happiness when you again see sunshine. I wish for you good health, and happiness.

Author.[2]

A message from the Shawnee-speaking God.

A long time ago there were many Shawnee Indians, but not now. At that time they were living in the dark. They were trying hard and finally they were too weak because they didn't know their God. Now part of the Good Book is written in their language. I wish for everyone to know it and everyone to have one. The Good Book is like a light because it directs you toward heaven. Everyone who doesn't have this Good Book travels in the dark. It teaches us how to love God and keep an open mind, God said. There are three ways to live a certain way, however, if they don't follow the right path they will forever be down.

If they want that type of life. Shawnees will get strength and happiness when they possess the Good Book. If they walk away from it, they will immediately lose their spirit.

Author.[3]

A sermon by a wise man[4]

Dull replies do not make people angry; but hateful speech encourages anger.[5]

God sees everywhere the good and the bad.[6] God watches mean people from a distance; but He hears them when they are praying to Him in need.

When man lives a certain way, he makes God happy, and God allows man to have a better relationship with Him.

Can a church-going man carry fire under his arm, but not burn?

Can another man walk on hot coals but not burn?

In the same way, someone who intermingles with his neighbors will not be respected.[7]

Anyone who does this will make his own spirit sick.

A wise son will make his father happy, but a foolish son will make his mother sad.[8]

A person who hates sermons hates his own spirit.

A person who enjoys debauchery will be weak;[9]

a child raised this way will never abandon his beliefs.

A foolish man says more than he knows but a wise man speaks last.[10]

More talk.

In the beginning, God made one man, then one woman. Then God gave man this woman; they became one. God did not want man to mate with man; but woman to mate with man. God created man and woman so that they would become one flesh;[11] so that their blood would be pure. But He allowed animals to run together, any old way; because no perish from earth [end of first page]

God gave His people a blessing.[12] The bad snake[13]

1. George Blanchard, an elder of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, translated the two extant pages of the *Shawnee Sun* into English. James Beatty, a 2008 graduate of Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, assisted him with word choice, copying, and typing.

2. Although the *Shawnee Sun* has typically been viewed as a tribal newspaper, the November 1841 publication is more akin to a Baptist sermon. The opening paragraphs of the *Sun* are rich in imagery of light and darkness, which has deep roots in both the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament. For a sample of such imagery, see Genesis 1:1–5; Exodus 3:2; 13:21–22; Psalms 18:28; 27:1; 119:105; John 1:4–9; 3:19–21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35–36; Acts 9:3–9; 26:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:7–14; Revelation 1:14–16.

3. The Shawnee term *Eieiwekeati*, translated here and above as "author," may simply be a title taken by the editor of the *Sun*, though it could also be a reference to God, who in the missionary worldview was the ultimate author of everything.

4. The following section relies heavily on verses from Proverbs. The wise man mentioned in the heading is most likely an allusion to King Solomon, traditionally considered the author of Proverbs.

5. See Proverbs 15:1.

6. See Proverbs 15:3.

7. See Proverbs 6:27–29.

8. See Proverbs 10:1; 13:1; 15:20.

9. See Proverbs 21:17; Galatians 5:19–21.

10. See Proverbs 17:28; 29:11.

11. See Genesis 2:24.

12. The sense of the last three words on the first page remains unclear, as does the relationship between the two extant pages of the *Sun*.

13. Throughout the *Sun*, the word *miceminato*, or "bad snake," is used to speak of Satan or the devil. Baptists were presumably comfortable with this understanding of Satan because many Christians identified him with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. See Gen 3:1–24.

encouraged them to live like animals; but, God tried to correct all those that lived that way.

When a man sleeps with a woman and leaves her, he is disrespected forever; when a woman does this to a man, she will always do no good. When these two live a good life, their children will know them. They also will not have a separate heart because death is the only thing that will separate them. But God allows a man to separate from a mean woman.

Two ways.[14]

There are two different paths to follow. One way leads to the big rock place.[15] One way to the bad snake place.[16] Jesus teaches how go to the big rock place. The bad snake teaches how to go to the bad snake place. Some will follow Jesus. Some the bad snake. My friend, which way is the right road? Will you go to the big rock place or the bad snake place? That's why it's important to try to learn.

The good way we lived is gone. When we were children, we lived one way because we didn't have the knowledge of what is good and what is bad.

When we became of age, we started knowing. That's when we started following the bad snake and we closed our ears. At first, anger was taught by the bad snake. That's no good. He teaches how to argue. That's no good. He teaches not to respect your elders. That's no good. He teaches to stop the Sabbath. That's no good. He teaches to hate God. That's no good. He teaches to kill. That's no good. He teaches sexual promiscuity. That's no good. He teaches how to steal. That's no good. He teaches how to tell a lie. That's no good. He teaches how to cheat. That's no good. He teaches how to get drunk. That's no good. He teaches hotheadedness, and also cursing. That's no good. He teaches how to enjoy fighting for someone else. That's no good. He teaches man how to leave his wife. That's no good. He teaches woman how to leave her husband. That's no good. He teaches women how to abort their children. That's no good. He teaches how to quit thinking about elders and also children. He teaches how to race horses. That's no good. He teaches how to go to dance. That's no good. He teaches how to pray for That's no good. He teaches not to respect each other. That's no good. He teaches how to pray to the sick person's spirit. That's no good. He teaches all kinds of evil. All of this comes from the bad snake. This is what happens when you follow the bad snake. This is the path to the bad snake place. God said that all liars, and drunks, and the sexually immoral, and those that encourage hotheadedness are going to a lake of fire on the other side. God said, He chases the bad people to the bad snake place. That way is no good. If you all follow this path you will die. The bad snake will try to make you his friend so that you burn on the other side. When he gets you there, there is no doubt he will burn you; and not put out the fire. God will feel sorry for you if you slide that way. Now, hear this what He teaches. He teaches that church is the way to the good life.

Love God with all your heart, and strength, and mind; in earnest.[17] He teaches so that you will not kill, so that you will not steal. So that you will not gossip. So that you will not cheat. So that you will not lie. So that you will not curse. So that you will not get mad. So that you will not argue. So that you will not get drunk. So that you will not go to dance.

He teaches how to love those who live close to you as if you yourself are teaching to treat someone different the same as yourself. [Last half sentence left untranslated for lack of necessary information.]

14. The following passage equates Shawnee and frontier culture with the path leading to hell. The author probably borrowed the "two ways" imagery from Matthew 7:13–14.

15. The big rock place is a pleasant place within Shawnee cosmology. Missionaries used this Shawnee understanding of the afterlife to convey the Christian concept of heaven.

16. The bad snake place is the place where the bad snake (devil) resides—hell.

17. See Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37.

missionaries viewed men as the appropriate year-round providers for families and sought to eliminate the role of women as farmers within Indian societies.[41] As early as 1813, Quaker missionaries encouraged Shawnee men to leave the forests for the fields and Shawnee women to leave the fields for the home where they could master domestic arts. Although this shift seemed natural to Quakers, it was emasculating for Shawnee men, demeaning to Shawnee women, and alien to both sexes. Missionaries also encouraged Shawnees to break up their communal fields into smaller plots that could be worked by individual families. Many Americans at the time idealized the yeoman farmer and regarded patriarchal families that supported themselves on their own parcel of land as the foundation of republicanism.[42]

41. Theda Purdue, *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 173, 189.

42. McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 8; Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors*, 50–52; Purdue, *Cherokee Women*, 188.

By the time Baptists printed the November 1841 issue of the *Sun*, Shawnees had already adopted aspects of American farming that suited their needs. However, missionaries continued to project the values of their male-dominated society onto Native communities by placing more power into the hands of men and teaching female subservience.[43] Instead of regarding men and women as equal and complementary, most missionaries saw gender as hierarchical, with women subordinate to men. Historian Barbara Welter pointed out in her seminal work on gender that the nineteenth-century concept of "true womanhood" embraced "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity." In the missionaries' worldview, a true woman lived out these ideals, first and foremost, through chastity and marital fidelity. Sexual freedom degraded women, threatened the role of men as head of the household, and subverted civic order.[44]

In their attempts to promote permanent, patriarchal Shawnee households on the Kansas frontier, Baptists used the *Shawnee Sun* to underscore the sacredness of monogamous relationships and preach against sexual promiscuity. Under the subheading "More talk," the *Sun*'s editor provided an abridged version of Genesis 2 that focused on the God-ordained relationship between man and woman: "In the beginning, God made one man, then one woman. Then God gave man this woman; they became one. . . . God created man and woman so that they would become one flesh." Furthermore, a relationship between a man and woman was not to be entered into lightly: "When a man sleeps with a woman and leaves her, he is disrespected forever; when a woman does this to a man, she will always do no good." Missionaries perceived Native marriages as casual arrangements because Algonquians understood marriage more loosely than Baptists did. In contrast to Shawnee relationships, missionary marriages were seen as contractual agreements, binding one man to one woman for life.[45]

The different views of marriage that existed on the reservation came to a head in 1840, when an Ottawa man named Wasaumsa, "threw away his medicine and began to pray." According to missionary and editor Johnston Lykins, Wasaumsa showed an interest in being baptized and joining the Baptist Church.[46] However, tension arose when Baptists discovered he had two wives. Missionaries decided to baptize the man and his wives but refused to admit them to a full standing in the church because "polygamy is contrary to the word of God, and even, to the light of nature."[47] Multiple-partner relationships among Shawnees were not especially prevalent but did occur frequently enough to attract criticism from the Shawnee Prophet, the early nineteenth-century religious visionary and brother of Tecumseh. As part of his pre-removal religious revival in Ohio, The Prophet condemned the Shawnee practice of polygamy.[48] The example of Wasaumsa illustrates the different assumptions Shawnees and Baptists maintained about marriage and family organization. Gendered understandings of work and an emphasis on long-lasting husband-wife relationships structured around male authority colored the missionaries' civilization program in their attempt to transform Indians into their own likeness. Furthermore, changes from communal cooperation to individual farming conveniently increased Indian reliance on government officials and missionaries, giving Indian reformers more leverage in advancing their agenda.

Just as missionaries tried to transform Algonquian gender roles and regularize Shawnee family life, they also tried to model Shawnee Christianity after their own styles of worship. Contrary to the expectations of some reformers at the time, the emigrant Indians of Kansas were not blank slates waiting to be enlightened by the religious teachings of white missionaries. In fact, Shawnees believed in an array of deities and engaged in various rituals that reflected their religious convictions.[49] Like all peoples, the Shawnees' religious beliefs, cosmology, and ceremonies were central to their own identity.

At the head of the Shawnee pantheon was the Supreme Being or Great Spirit. Baptists identified the Great Spirit with their own notion of God, and tried to capitalize on this instance of convergence between Shawnee and Christian beliefs. In the *Sun*, for example, missionaries used the Shawnee word for Great Spirit—*Tapalamalikwa*—when referring to God. Although most Shawnees acknowledge the Great Spirit today, he remains only vaguely conceptualized. Some time during

43. Clara Sue Kidwell, "Comment: Native American Women's Responses to Christianity," *Ethnohistory* 43 (Autumn 1996): 721–25; Purdue and Green, *The Cherokee Removal*, 12.

44. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 152; Purdue, *Cherokee Women*, 62, 159, 191.

45. *Shawnee Sun*, November 1941; Purdue, *Cherokee Women*, 191–92.

46. Johnston Lykins to Isaac McCoy, April 2, 1840, M1129, Roll 10, Isaac McCoy Papers.

47. S. Chapin to Isaac McCoy, April 21, 1840, M1129, Roll 10, Isaac McCoy Papers.

48. R. David. Edmunds, *The Shawnee Prophet* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 33–36.

49. Charles Callender, "Shawnee," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. Bruce G. Trigger (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 15:628.

the nineteenth-century there appears to have been a shift in religious emphasis away from the Great Spirit, a male deity, to Our Grandmother, a female deity. Shawnees typically view Our Grandmother as more approachable and intimately connected to the affairs of this world.[50]

Although lesser deities existed in Shawnee religion, such as the grandson of Our Grandmother, Corn Woman, and Thunderbirds, Our Grandmother generally played the most central role in Shawnee ceremonialism. For instance, Shawnees credited the origin of the spring and fall Bread Dances to Our Grandmother. During the spring Bread Dance, Shawnees gave thanks to Our Grandmother and to lesser deities and asked for blessing in the coming agricultural season. General fertility and the female role as farmer were emphasized. The fall Bread Dance, held at the end of the agricultural season, serves as a ceremony of thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest and a prayer for successful hunts during the coming months.[51]

Ceremonial dances reinforced and reflected Shawnee religion, cosmology, and history, but they elicited thoughts of heathenism—even Satanism—in missionary imaginations. On the second page of the *Sun*, the editor developed a long list of diabolic activities that contrast with the correct way of living. The *Sun* preached against things typically considered immoral, for instance killing, stealing, lying, and cursing—activities that both Shawnees and white frontiersmen engaged in too frequently in the Baptists' opinion. But the editor also insisted that the devil "teaches how to go to dance" and "how to pray for your spirit and for your medicine for no reason." Ceremonial dances and Shawnee prayers had no place within the Baptists' biblical worldview. Missionaries associated these rituals with traditional Shawnee religion and hoped to supplant them with Anglo-American forms of Christian worship. In missionary eyes, Shawnee religion and unadulterated Christianity were mutually exclusive belief systems.[52]

To convince Shawnees that they were sinful and in need of salvation, missionaries had to engage in a sort of "religious translation." In other words, Baptists had to present Christianity in a way that made sense to Shawnees.[53]

In their attempts to promote permanent, patriarchal Shawnee households on the Kansas frontier, Baptists used the Shawnee Sun *to underscore the sacredness of monogamous relationships and preach against sexual promiscuity. Multiple-partner relationships among Shawnees were not especially prevalent but did occur frequently enough to attract criticism from the Shawnee Prophet, the early nineteenth-century religious visionary and brother of Tecumseh. As part of his pre-removal religious revival in Ohio, The Prophet, pictured here, condemned the Shawnee practice of polygamy.*

Just as Meeker's Algonquian-language orthography allowed missionaries to cross the language barrier, the act of religious translation promised to bridge the cultural and religious divide that separated Baptists and Shawnees. The process of religious translation—again, like the process of language translation—necessarily involved Native participants. In his study on Jesuits and Illinois Indians, Tracy Leavelle wrote, "Translation between languages involved active mediation between cultures and thrust participants in the language encounter into a series of negotiations over meaning."[54] In other words, translating between languages and between religions allowed both missionary and Indian participants to inject meaning into the terms and ideas addressed.

50. Howard, *Shawnee!*, 162–90.

51. Howard, *Shawnee!*, 288, 296, 245; Callender, "Shawnee," 628; Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors*, 50–51.

52. *Shawnee Sun*, November 1841; Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries*, 65; Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing*, 101.

53. In his study of Wampanoag Christianity on Martha's Vineyard, David Silverman argued that Puritan missionaries had to "filter Christian teachings through Wampanoag religious ideas, terminology, and practices—an approach one might call religious translation." A similar process took place in Indian territory; however, missionaries working among the removed Algonquian tribes appear to have been less culturally flexible than the Mayhew family that worked with Wampanoags. Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries*, 33.

54. Tracy Leavelle, "'Bad Things' and 'Good Hearts': Mediation, Meaning, and the Language of Illinois Christianity," *Church History* 76 (June 2007): 370.

Two terms from the *Sun* that have already been mentioned—the Shawnee words for "Christian" and "God"—reflect the way in which translating Christian concepts into Shawnee created room for an indigenous understanding of Christianity. Shawnees understood Christians as people attached to the written word, and thus referred to them as "someone that can write" or "paper men." To Shawnees, the most distinctive feature of missionaries was not their light complexion, stiff clothes, or abstruse language, but the letters, journals, and holy book to which they were adamantly attached. In addition, the *Sun*'s editor chose the word *Tapalamalikwa*, or "Great Spirit," for God, which coincided with the Shawnees' understanding of the Supreme Being.[55]

Similarly, missionaries tried to convey the concepts of heaven and hell in an intelligible manner to their Indian audience. Shawnees envisioned an afterlife, but not an afterlife in which some individuals received eternal punishment and others everlasting paradise based on their beliefs and actions on earth. Protestants struggled to convince Shawnees that correct belief and proper action in this life led to one of two fates: "There are two different paths to follow. One way leads to heaven. One way to hell. Jesus teaches how to go to heaven. The devil teaches how to go to hell. Some will follow Jesus. Some the devil. My friend, which way is the right road? Will you go to heaven or hell?"[56] For the foreign concepts of heaven and hell to make sense to Shawnees, missionaries, with the help of Native assistants, had to use terms consistent with Shawnee ideas about reality. Within Shawnee religious ideology, evil took the form of Giant Horned Snakes that lurked in deep rivers and lakes. Missionaries used Shawnees' understanding of the Giant Horned Snakes to express the ideas of Satan and hell.[57] Throughout the *Sun* the devil is referred to as the *miceminato*, or "bad snake." Baptists were presumably comfortable with this understanding of Satan because many Christians identified him with the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Because "the devil teaches how to go to hell," the word for hell used in the *Sun*—*miceminatoke*—translates as "bad snake place."[58]

By linking the Christian notion of the devil and hell to the Shawnee idea of Giant Horned Snakes, missionaries tried to scare Shawnees into accepting Christianity. The *Sun* painted hell as a miserable place of fire and pain, and warned that "the devil will try to make you his friend so that you burn on the other side. When he gets you there, there is no doubt he will burn you; and not put out the fire." Arguing, killing, lying, getting drunk, leaving one's spouse, racing horses, going to dance, and praying for medicine—"All of this," explained the editor of the *Sun*, "comes from the devil" and "is the path to hell." Accordingly, salvation rested in renouncing these evil practices and following the way of Jesus who "teaches how to go to heaven."[59] The path to heaven, unsurprisingly, involved complying with the missionaries' call for literacy and cultural change. Missionaries could not conceive of Shawnees connecting with God on their own terms or through their own rituals; God was in the Bible and church, not ceremonial dances and sacred bundles.

Largely because of their strict condemnation of American Indian culture and religion, missionaries encountered strong resistance to Christianity among removed tribes during the 1830s. When Jotham Meeker discussed the possibility of laboring among the Ottawas in 1833, an Ottawa chief replied that the Bible had been given to whites, not Indians. Missionaries, he argued, should keep their religion to themselves because Ottawas "had a religion of their own, and they wished to keep peaceable possession of it."[60] The Ottawa chief's response to Meeker's request reflected the Indian idea of religious separation that dated back at least to the mid-1700s. According to this "theology of separation," God created Indians, blacks, and whites separately and gave them different religions. Interracial conversion was pointless because Christianity applied only to whites and Native religions applied only to Indians. Some American Indians, such as the Ottawa chief, employed this theory of polygenesis to counter the efforts of their would-be converters.[61]

Tension between Christianity and the tribe's ancestral religion created disagreement and fragmentation within the tribe. In 1834, when roughly 80 percent of Shawnees were non-Christians, a resistance movement formed with the goal of expelling missionaries from the reservation. The number of Shawnees involved in the rebellion will never be fully known. Isaac McCoy downplayed the incident to his eastern authorities, reporting that only a handful of Shawnees were discontent with the missionaries' presence. McCoy's ability to filter information to government officials reveals the imbalanced

55. *Shawnee Sun*, November 1841.
56. Ibid.; see also Howard, *Shawnee!*, 163–68.
57. Howard, *Shawnee!*, 176–77.
58. *Shawnee Sun*, November 1841.
59. Ibid.
60. Jotham Meeker to Lucius Bolles, November 29, 1833, M 617, Roll 1, Jotham Meeker Papers.
61. Gregory Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle For Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 21–30.

While working on tribal lands in present-day Kansas, Protestant missionaries, such as the one pictured here poring over a text with potential converts in Isaac McCoy's History of Baptist Indians Missions *(1840), tried to dictate the terms of subsistence and salvation. Literacy and the power of the press promised to shift more influence into the hands of missionaries and transform Indian life into an idealized version of Christian Anglo-Americanism. The Shawnee, however, were active participants in the changes taking place on the reservation and often rejected the proselytizing efforts of missionaries.*

power relations present on the reservation.[62] Nonetheless, the independence movement must have served as a reminder to missionaries that Christians were still a minority on tribal lands. In fact, numbers for the Shawnee Baptist church throughout the 1830s were meager. In 1838 the Shawnee Baptist Church boasted only eleven Native members—three of whom were Shawnee. The Methodist Church among the Shawnees had an only slightly more impressive number of eighty Native members.[63] Shawnee resistance to missionaries, evident in the push to expel missionaries from tribal lands in 1834 and meager church membership throughout the 1830s, demonstrated their general opposition to the missionaries' religious and cultural message. And as the content of the *Sun* indicates, ceremonial dances and Shawnee forms of prayer persisted into the 1840s despite intense pressure from missionaries to abandon such practices.

The *Shawnee Sun* is intriguing because it points to Shawnee-missionary collaboration, on the one hand, and widespread Shawnee resistance to the broader cultural and religious demands associated with Christianity on the other. While working on tribal lands in present-day Kansas, Protestant missionaries tried to dictate the terms of subsistence and salvation. Literacy and the power of the press promised to shift more influence into the hands of missionaries and transform Indian life into an idealized version of Christian Anglo-Americanism. By printing scripture and religious tracts in an Algonquian-language orthography, Jotham Meeker and his fellow missionaries hoped to beget a new era among the removed Woodland Indian tribes. Isaac McCoy believed that if an ample supply of missionaries could be employed to instruct Indians to read in their own language, "a revolution among them might speedily be effected."[64]

Much to the Baptists' frustration, a revolution of the magnitude McCoy envisioned never occurred because Shawnees were not amorphous lumps of clay waiting to be shaped into clones of white missionaries. Rather, they were active participants in the changes taking place on the reservation. Despite the efforts of men such as Meeker, DeShane, and Blackfeather, missionaries and Shawnee Christians were unable to develop an effective Christian vernacular that spoke to the majority of Shawnees. During the first two decades following removal, examples of Shawnee-missionary cooperation were overshadowed by a widespread rejection of Christianity. In the end, the *Shawnee Sun* speaks just as loudly to Shawnee cultural persistence in the face of intense proselytizing as it does to the importance of literacy to Second Great Awakening missionaries. KH

62. Warren, "The Baptists, the Methodists, and the Shawnees," 160; Warren, *The Shawnees and Their Neighbors*, 109; Abing, "A Fall from Grace," 178–79.

63. Isaac McCoy, *Annual Register of Indian Affairs Within the Indian (or Western) Territory* (Shawanoe Baptist Mission: J. G. Pratt, 1838), 4:62–63.

64. McCoy, *Annual Register of Indian Affairs*, 2:27.